

REMARKS

In view of the above amendments and following remarks, reconsideration of the rejections that are contained in the Office Action of December 19, 2008 is respectfully requested.

In the Office Action, the Examiner rejected claims 14-21 as being anticipated by WO 02/47139 to Ebara Corporation of Tokyo, Japan (Ebara). However, it is respectfully submitted that the present invention, particularly as now reflected by the above amendments, clearly defines over Ebara.

The present invention has been previously discussed. The present amendments provide the further recitation that the temporary retaining pins each have a head portion having a tapered surface provided so that, when placing the substrate on the temporary retaining pins, the tapered surface contacts a peripheral end surface of the substrate and effects positioning of the substrate. Claim 14 has been further amended to recite that the head portion has a retaining portion that projects outwardly for receiving thereon and retaining a peripheral lower surface of the substrate.

In accordance with the present invention as described with respect to Figs. 10-18, for example, a peripheral portion of the lower surface of a substrate W may be supported by, for example, a hand H of a thin drop-in type and transferred to a position above the temporary retaining pins 194. When the hand is lowered, the substrate W is guided and positioned by the tapered surfaces of the temporary retaining pins. It is placed and temporarily retained on the retaining portions 194c of the temporary retaining pins 194. The hand can then be pulled out through a gap that is formed between the substrate and the substrate receiving ring.

By contrast, in Ebara, the reference cited by the Examiner, there is disclosed a substrate processing unit that has electric terminals 902. These are considered to be the temporary retaining pins recited in claim 14 of the present invention by the Examiner. Each of the electric terminals 902 is urged upwardly by the elastic force of a spring 910 and independently pressed against a copper seed layer with a constant force. Note lines 1-6 of page 97 of the Ebara specification.

However, these pins of Ebara, which are in fact electric terminals, do not have a head portion having a tapered surface provided so that when placing the substrate on the temporary retaining pins, the tapered surface contacts a peripheral end surface of the substrate and effects positioning of the

substrate. Nor do they have a retaining portion that projects outwardly for receiving and retaining a peripheral lower surface of the substrate.

Accordingly, it is readily seen that independent claim 14 as now amended clearly patentably distinguishes over the Ebara reference, and indication of such is respectfully requested. Claims 18-21 have now been canceled because the limitation of claim 18 has been incorporated into claim 14 and the remaining claims are accordingly redundant. Several dependent claims have been added to further focus on the distinguishing characteristics of the present invention.

In view of the above amendments and remarks, it is submitted that the present application is now in condition for allowance, and the Examiner is requested to pass the case to issue. If the Examiner should have any comments or suggestions to help speed the prosecution of this application, the Examiner is requested to contact Applicants' undersigned representative.

Respectfully submitted,

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